

1 DCPS PUBLIC FISCAL YEAR 2016 BUDGET HEARING

2 Thursday, January 8, 2015

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5 Payne Elementary School

6 1445 C St., N.E.

7 Washington, DC

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. CHRISTOPHER RINKUS: Tonight is the
3 FY-16 DC Public Schools Public Budget Hearing. This
4 is my fifth public budget hearing. And I can tell
5 you already, I think it's going to be our best.

6 (Laughter.)

7 We've got some information for you guys.
8 I think we're going to try to just run through
9 briefly some of the relevant contexts, some of the
10 changes we saw put into place last physical year.
11 The Chancellor is going to speak briefly about some
12 of her priorities for the upcoming year.

13 But, for the most part, this is really an
14 opportunity for us to hear from you. So I will try
15 not to stand up here too long. I know the Chancellor
16 wants to hear from you guys as well.

17 So, without further adieu, this is our
18 first event for FY-16. But, like last year, we have
19 a series of events that are planned. This one is
20 more of a one-way dialogue, we listen to you.
21 Sometimes there are questions, sometimes there follow
22 up, but more often than not, it's really our chance

1 to listen.

2 In the upcoming weeks, we'll have more
3 two-way dialogues. So chances for you to talk to us
4 and for us to talk back, and for us to really probe,
5 hear more and start to explore what you as a
6 D.C.-based community want to see as part of these
7 school budgets.

8 So our timeline. Today is November 17th.
9 We had two important things happen today. The first
10 is a student budget hearing that we had this morning
11 at our central office. And it was a really
12 interesting conversation, a great opportunity to hear
13 from high school students about what they wanted to
14 see in their school budgets.

15 I for one was really taken aback at just
16 the amount of sophistication they brought to the
17 question. Really remarkable stuff and I think really
18 set the tone for us coming into tonight and wanted to
19 hear from the adults as it pertains to DCPS.

20 That's the second part of today. This is
21 the public budget hearing.

22 Another couple of important events that

1 are on the calendar, this weekend, Saturday is the
2 D.C. ED Fest. It's an opportunity for parents and
3 community members to come out to the D.C. Armory and
4 see all of the schools in D.C. So DCPS, PCS Schools,
5 really a chance to celebrate all of the diverse
6 offerings that we have here in D.C.

7 Shortly after the My School's D.C. Lottery
8 will open in December on December 15th. That's the
9 opportunity for new families, for siblings to apply
10 to attend these schools.

11 The budget work will really take off in
12 mid-December and run through January and early
13 February. The key milestones are, we will release
14 projected student enrollment in mid-December. Those
15 are the numbers that will define the enrollment for
16 the upcoming school year. And for those of you who
17 have been around this work for some time understand
18 that the enrollment is really the primary input into
19 the school budget allocation. Therefore, those
20 numbers are particularly important and principals
21 will have a couple of weeks to look at those,
22 understand, consult with LSATs, figure out how those

1 numbers will affect what they plan for the upcoming
2 school year.

3 In mid-February we will have the City-wide
4 Revenue Projections that are announced. For those of
5 you who have been to these hearings in the past, you
6 will remember, those revenue projections are of
7 critical importance to DCPS as we think about our
8 budget.

9 We can do lots of planning, we can do some
10 speculation, but until we have those hard numbers,
11 it's tough to know exactly what the amounts are going
12 to be that we can then make available to schools. So
13 that's something that we try to highlight on our
14 calendar.

15 And lastly, in March we plan to release
16 allocations and turnaround school budgets to the
17 Chancellor. And in April the mayor will submit her
18 budget to the D.C. Council.

19 Before I turn it over, I'm just going to
20 talk quickly about some contextual information that I
21 think helps as we think about this budget. We are in
22 year three of a five-year ambitious plan called the

1 Capital Commitment. I'm happy to tell you guys that
2 we've seen progress on all fronts. What I'm
3 particularly and personally excited about is goal
4 five, which is our student enrollment goal.

5 When we sat down to craft this plan three
6 years ago, our goal for enrollment was to exceed
7 47,000 students. On October 6th of this year, we
8 reported enrollment of 47,651 students.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. RINKUS: Thank you.

11 It's collective. I think this is -- I
12 think it's really exciting. Well, let me talk about
13 the goals and I'll get into enrollment a little more.

14 We actually went back and revised our
15 goal. We said, 47,000 we don't want to rest on our
16 laurels. We said, let's make that 50,000 and let's
17 make it in that same five-year period.

18 So before we talk about this upcoming
19 year, just understanding where we've been, FY-15 we
20 had three big investments. We had our middle grades
21 investments, our investments in our lowest 40
22 performing schools, and our sustained investments in

1 our elementary schools. Those investments really
2 broke across a couple common areas, namely extended
3 day, so expanding and extended the opportunities to
4 our 40 lowest performing schools, we have a number of
5 new schools now offering a longer school day, which
6 we think is really exciting.

7 We invested tens of millions of dollars,
8 dozen of new staff in our middle schools. We had
9 long heard from parents, from community members and
10 from students that the middle school offerings in
11 DCPS were not where they needed to be. And last year
12 we made a target investment in our middle schools and
13 we saw new social emotional support staff. So things
14 like social workers, intervention teachers, we
15 offered -- I'm sorry, we invested in new curriculum
16 teachers so we could offer a fuller curriculum to the
17 middle school students. And then lastly we provided
18 funding for excursions, field trips, opportunities
19 for middle school students to see and experience more
20 of the flavor of not just D.C., but the nation, and
21 for some students even internationally.

22 Just more relevant context. We've seen

1 gains in reading and math over the past several
2 years. In 2014 we reached our highest proficiency
3 rates ever in reading and math in DCCAS.

4 And this one I'll just touch upon quickly,
5 although not to understate its importance, last year
6 -- I'm sorry, this most recent CAS we saw gains for
7 some schools in math, and for some schools we saw
8 gains in both reading and math. And for these high
9 schools in particular, really remarkable to see these
10 kind of gains in both reading and math in a single
11 year. Really something.

12 And so this is our enrollment slide. This
13 is our enrollment over the past seven years. You
14 will see that this year's reported enrollment totaled
15 the 47,651 is our highest in seven years. It's the
16 third consecutive year of growth. It represents 3
17 percent growth over the prior years which is the
18 largest percentage gain in enrollment growth in the
19 last seven years.

20 This is what I meant by the collective
21 effort. We saw schools in all wards and all
22 neighborhoods make gains. You know, we talk about

1 schools like Powell in Ward 4 nearly doubled in size
2 over the past five years. Henley, Kelly Miller,
3 nearly doubled in size. Stanton nearly doubled in
4 size. These are schools where we're seeing really
5 exciting enrollment growth. And I think it's a
6 really encouraging sign for the change that people
7 are beginning to recognize in DCPS.

8 Without further adieu, let me turn it over
9 to the Chancellor to give her the opportunity to talk
10 about her goals for the upcoming budget year.

11 CHANCELLOR KAYA HENDERSON: Thank you,
12 Chris.

13 Good evening, everybody. It's rainy
14 outside, but it doesn't have to be rainy in here.
15 We're here tonight to kick off the budget season
16 planning for fiscal year '16. And I'm excited to be
17 here. I'm excited to hear from you, what you think
18 the priorities are that we need to fund and focus on.

19 We did something very different today as
20 Chris mentioned. We started out by first hearing
21 from students about what they wanted to see in the
22 budget. And we've never done that before. We had

1 two representatives from nearly every high school in
2 the city. They prepared a presentation around the
3 five things that they actually thought would be most
4 impactful to improving schools in DCPS and we heard
5 some -- we heard inspiring things, we heard amazing
6 things, we heard disappointing things. We heard
7 things that we can fix tomorrow, and we heard things
8 that we are going to need to fund over the next
9 couple of years. And hearing directly from students
10 was an awesome opportunity.

11 I think if I had to sort of wrap it up in
12 a nutshell, they said three things. They said, we
13 want more rigorous academic course work, which is
14 great. They said, we want more enrichment and extra
15 curricular opportunities. And we want better food.
16 Those are the three things -- and food came up 250
17 times. They are not fans of the healthy food.

18 And I think one of the things that struck
19 me as we asked a lot of questions is, there are a lot
20 of things that we have funded that we've given
21 schools money to do that when things get down to the
22 individual school level, those things actually don't

1 get done. And so to hear from students who said, you
2 know, we want more X and we know we've given that
3 very same school money for more X, made us really
4 have to think about this tension that we continue to
5 wrestle with, and that is the autonomy to allow
6 schools to make the decisions that they think are
7 good and right and this equity question, how do we
8 ensure that across the city everybody has the
9 opportunity to a certain type of academic experience.
10 And so that's one of the big things that we're going
11 to struggle with this year, I think. And we're going
12 to be a little tighter on things that we require
13 schools to do so that everybody across the city is
14 experiencing the same things. And some of you are
15 going to push back and say, well, no my school knows
16 that we need this and not that and blah-blah-blah.
17 And I ask you to join me in that journey. We want to
18 find the happy medium between allowing schools to
19 make the decisions that are best for them without
20 creating more inequities across the city.

21 Equity is really the big piece that's on
22 our mind. We have a lot of exciting schools doing a

1 lot of exciting things. But we want to make sure
2 that we're building a school district that will allow
3 ever single student, no matter what part of town they
4 live in, no matter what school they go to, to have an
5 excellent education. And we've put some things in
6 place to be able to do that. But we still have a lot
7 more work to go.

8 So, three, maybe four big things on our
9 minds right now. The first is really around
10 rethinking high schools. So, I'll call it equity in
11 the high school academic experience. As many of you
12 know, two years ago we worked really hard to put
13 funding in elementary schools across the board to
14 ensure that all of our elementary schools could offer
15 the four core courses plus art and music and PE and
16 foreign language and library and a few other things.

17 And last year we put about \$17 million in
18 middle grades to try to do the same thing, to create
19 some academic parity to create diversity in the
20 offerings in our middle grades program, no matter
21 whether you're in a stand-alone middle school, or in
22 a K through 8 education campus. And it's about time

1 that we start to do some work around high schools.
2 It's about time that we start to end the disparity
3 where some of our high schools only offer four AP
4 courses and others offer 29 AP courses. It's time
5 for us to make sure that kids have opportunities to
6 have a number of foreign languages, not just one
7 foreign language.

8 It's time for us to make sure that high
9 school students have multiple opportunities to get to
10 and through college and career and the only way to
11 demonstrate competency is not just by sitting in a
12 classroom for a certain number of hours, but being
13 able to give them the opportunity to demonstrate
14 mastery through internships. Or by taking college
15 courses, or by doing a whole host of things. And so
16 we are committed to doing more to rethinking high
17 school and we think it will take a couple of years to
18 do that. But we want to begin that now so that we
19 can ensure that our high school students are having
20 as robust an experience as our elementary and our
21 middle grade students.

22 The second piece is equity and academic

1 rigor. In 2010 when I became chancellor, I did a
2 bunch of meetings with teachers -- focus groups with
3 teachers to say what can we do to help you do your
4 jobs better? And they said, well, you've told us how
5 you want us to teach through the teacher evaluation
6 system. Now, let's talk about what we're teaching
7 because we don't have a standardized curriculum and
8 I'm worried that what I'm teaching my third graders
9 is very different than what people on the other side
10 of town are teaching their third graders. And so
11 because we didn't have a standardized curriculum we
12 also saw the common core coming around the corner and
13 we took it upon ourselves to design a totally common
14 core-aligned curriculum, kindergarten through 12th
15 grade, in all subject areas.

16 We started the work in 2010 and we are now
17 in our fourth year of implementation of a common core
18 aligned curriculum. Even though we have a curriculum
19 that's standardized across the District, I cannot
20 guarantee that the rigor and the depth of the
21 academic experience that's happening across the city
22 is even. In fact, on the first day of school I went

1 to two different first-grade classes that were
2 teaching the very same lesson. And they were wildly
3 different, wildly different. One teacher had her
4 children writing an essay about the topic. First
5 graders, prewriting. But they had pages and pages of
6 writing. And the other teacher was using the same
7 lesson to reinforce letter recognition. And so we
8 want to make sure that across the board, the depth of
9 academic rigor is there. Not just that you're
10 teaching the same topic, but that in fact we're
11 holding every single one of our students to
12 incredibly high expectations. And so, you'll see a
13 lot of work around deepening that curriculum, anchor
14 assignments that everybody across the city is doing
15 at the same time so that teachers will have the
16 opportunity to work together to norm around what
17 student work expectations look like and to create
18 professional learning communities that will help us
19 give our young people the best.

20 The third priority is really around equity
21 for our young men of color. Forty-three percent of
22 the students in DCPS are African American or Latino

1 males. And they lag their peers in everything from
2 math and reading scores to graduation rates to all of
3 the other statistics. And I think we have to do
4 something different for them. The way we've been
5 trying to reach them hasn't been working. And so, we
6 want to think strategically about things that we
7 could do to really change the experience that they're
8 having in school and help them be more successful so
9 that they are no longer lagging their peers.

10 We want to be clear, we want to be direct,
11 we'll release a strategic plan around young men of
12 color in the next couple of weeks. And we
13 fundamentally believe that if we don't figure out a
14 way to make these young people successful, 43 percent
15 of our population, we can never get to be an
16 excellent urban school district.

17 Finally, last year we made a big
18 investment in extended day programs. And in fact,
19 this year we expect to continue that investment. Not
20 everybody who wanted to take advantage of extended
21 day was able to last year. We have a number of
22 schools who also are planning to pilot extended year

1 programs because many of our -- frankly -- teachers
2 want more time with their students. They want time
3 to be able to go in depth. They were asked as
4 schools to do 750 things in about ten minutes. And
5 so having more time to do more of the things that we
6 need and want to do is important. And so we want to
7 continue to extend the opportunities for a longer
8 school day and a longer school year for the schools
9 who think that that will help their young people be
10 successful.

11 I guess I'll turn it back over to Chris.
12 But I want to say, you know, we have ideas, you have
13 ideas. There are things that all of us want to do.
14 Last year we knew that we would likely get a huge
15 increase in our funding and we did see a huge
16 increase in our funding. It also helped that
17 enrollment went up because that means -- I tell my
18 team all the time -- enrollment is our hustle. It's
19 how we get money. So we need to make sure that we
20 are attracting and retaining our families. This year
21 we're not sure. In fact, to date, we've been told
22 that we'll probably remain flat in our budget. Just

1 because we're remaining flat in our budget, it
2 doesn't mean that we can't still do new things.

3 The questions that we have to ask
4 ourselves are, what are the things that we don't want
5 to do anymore? And that's a rarity in school
6 districts. We just pile on, pile on, pile on. But
7 we will ask ourselves, what are things that we don't
8 want to do in order to make sure that we can fund the
9 priorities, the ever-changing priorities.

10 As many of you know, there are 750 things
11 that DCPS needs to do. And in any budget year we're
12 able to do some of them, not all of them. And so
13 we'll have arguments about what we're doing when;
14 right? And all of that is part of healthy public
15 debate. And so I'm excited to hear from you tonight
16 about, what's working and what you want to see
17 continue. Excited to hear about what you think that
18 we need to reprioritize or fund differently. And I'm
19 excited to hear about any ideas that you have either
20 for the things that we're thinking about or for
21 things that you're thinking about, or that you're
22 hearing from schools and students and families.

1 You know, there will be no answers
2 tonight; right? Because we won't know our number.
3 But just to help you understand, a lot of the things
4 that we've heard, even though, you know, we won't be
5 able to answer all your questions tonight or say,
6 yes, we'll fund this, or no, we'll fund that. I want
7 you to understand that a lot of the things that we
8 hear in the public hearings, we actually fund. We
9 actually fund. And so we can't fund everything, and
10 we can't fund everything right when you want to. But
11 these are incredibly instructive for us in the same
12 way that hearing from students was instructive for
13 us, to hear from you.

14 So I'll turn it over to Chris so that he
15 can get the process started.

16 MR. RINKUS: Just one last thing before
17 we get started. I wanted to recognize our host,
18 Vielca Scott Marcus, the folks at Payne for having us
19 in their beautiful building. Thank you very much.

20 (Applause.)

21 MR. RINKUS: And the first testimony
22 should be from David Dickinson.

1 MR. DICKINSON: Chancellor Henderson and
2 DCPS representatives, thank you. I've got four
3 items. I don't know if you have that testimony in
4 front of you, but I'll quickly go through them and
5 then introduce myself.

6 One, increase Title I funding for
7 additional or later in the afternoon school bus
8 transportation to make sure that what is happening
9 during the current school day is really working.
10 Then think about expansion and extended day
11 opportunities and address achievement gaps by funding
12 tutoring and intervention during the school day.

13 But perhaps there should be an expansion
14 of the school, either, enrichment model or the SEM to
15 additional schools in DCPS including Hearst
16 Elementary with funding provided for a SEM
17 coordinator position from the central office.

18 Three, provide budget flexibility. You
19 know, there's that tension there, for local school to
20 allocate funding for intervention and tutoring versus
21 other extended day needs in the context of that SEM
22 model.

1 And then finally, sort of a hodgepodge of
2 early intervention pre K three and autism, Hearst
3 Elementary can increase their enrollment from 47,000
4 to 47,000 in ten or 15, if you give us a pre K three
5 program at Hearst.

6 So, good evening and thank you for the
7 opportunity to share some thoughts on the FY-16
8 budget. My name is David Dickenson. I'm a proud
9 public school parent at Hearst Elementary. I speak
10 in my personal capacity despite being a previous PTA
11 president and LSAC co-chair. By now you've heard the
12 great progress that's happened at Hearst, the
13 physical renovation of our building and new expansion
14 and our fantastic new principal, Principal Thomas.

15 Most importantly Hearst remains a diverse,
16 small school with students from all eight wards, wide
17 socio-economic backgrounds and diverse racial and
18 nationality traits.

19 As DCPS looks to address academic and
20 other achievement and success gaps across the city,
21 it is appropriate to examine what has happened at
22 Hearst and what can be done to further our efforts at

1 Hearst and across the school district.

2 I would like to address the expanded,
3 extended day opportunities priority. If described
4 with enough certainty and its purpose and flexibility
5 and its implementation and enough support and
6 management through headquarters, this priority goes
7 to the heart of addressing achievement gaps while
8 also creating a true opportunity for character
9 development, student satisfaction and reason for
10 students to care about their learning. However, a
11 traditional definition or implementation of extended
12 day wherein teachers or students are required to
13 attend or they're required to do the traditional
14 route learning, worksheets, reading and math didn't
15 come through in what you expressed in your priority
16 and I hope we don't follow that path.

17 If part of the goal is to increase test
18 scores, then keeping kids after school when they are
19 tired is not going to work. Additional funding
20 should be allocated for tutoring and intervention
21 during the school day, as I mentioned, but additional
22 money should be allocated for at-risk or

1 low-performing children in adequate amounts at small
2 schools such as Hearst.

3 In other words, we need more instructional
4 aids during the day, receptors, low-performing kids,
5 that would get at the heart of it and then segue into
6 the school-wide enrichment model I'm looking at -- at
7 after school real world experience is what they're
8 learning after school.

9 To be specific Hearst had tried to add
10 additional bus service for students that we wished to
11 experience our PTA enrichment program let alone
12 DCPS-funded programs. And we didn't get it. So we
13 encouraged more Title I funding for after-school
14 buses to make that available and transparent to all
15 the schools.

16 Turning to what is happening during the
17 school day and making sure we are optimizing such
18 time, we need to take some of the themes of extended
19 day, as I mentioned earlier, and make it part of the
20 current school day. Whether that's the school-wide
21 enrichment model or SEM, with central office
22 coordination and management but realize that the

1 continuous focus on repeated testing is unnecessarily
2 pressing against the time for actual learning. And
3 the continuous focus on work shoots and route
4 learning is pressing against actual learning as well.

5 So in addition to expanded SEM funding, we
6 need to allocate additional funds for school for
7 subpopulations of students that need direct and
8 meaningful intervention.

9 It is also important to maintain our
10 current programs and fully exploit the resources and
11 programs underway. For example, the concepts of
12 extended day are also embedded in the city as our
13 classroom, but we have never fully developed it,
14 coordinated it, managed it, or exploited all of the
15 D.C.'s resources and made them equitably available to
16 all the schools. The curriculum materials need to be
17 developed and used.

18 TIMEKEEPER: You now have one minute left.

19 MR. DICKINSON: Thank you. I am confident
20 that third graders across the city experienced the
21 Smithsonian in too many different ways with poorly
22 lacking in full and enrichment opportunity for those

1 experiences.

2 I also hope that the PWP program which
3 Hearst has used continues to be fully funded. It's
4 been great at Hearst. We have talking circles based
5 on native American experiences and segue that all the
6 way up through the embassies and diverse -- through
7 that experience.

8 Finally, my understanding is that pre K --
9 three decisions still have not been made for many
10 schools. Ward three doesn't have any to my
11 knowledge. Hearst Elementary is a great opportunity
12 given our diverse population to make that happen.
13 I'd also like to see more of a coordinated effort
14 across the autism program. I'm not an autism expert,
15 but our school is fantastic and we'd love to partner
16 with other schools to make sure those opportunities
17 are real and coordinated.

18 And I think I've already spoken to the pre
19 K-3 issue. Thanks for your time.

20 MS. TRACEY ALBERSTEIN YN: And I'm
21 providing testimony on behalf of D.C. Arts and
22 Humanities Education Cooperative.

1 And we're a membership organization and
2 many of our 85 members provide some of the highest
3 quality arts and humanities education opportunities
4 in the country.

5 So our members provide some of the highest
6 quality arts and humanities education opportunity in
7 the country and it's all free of charge to D.C.
8 public schools.

9 The demand for the community partners to
10 provide these experiences is on the increase. And we
11 have been functioning as a collective voice on arts
12 education for 15 years and have a diverse and active
13 membership. And we're thrilled with the city as our
14 classroom experiential learning task force. We can
15 help integrate our members into this system. We feel
16 that the task force kind of mirrors the arts for
17 every student program as we connect to the -- we
18 connect each out-of-school learning experience to the
19 curriculum that teachers are learning in school and
20 we can help to expand the scope and sequence
21 documents for the city as our classroom. And we can
22 serve about -- we can serve every student in D.C. if

1 we were properly funded using this mechanism.

2 And D.C. is home to so many world class
3 arts and humanities resources that we should be
4 well-known nationally as an arts education city
5 leading the way in how to invest a city's rich
6 cultural resources in tomorrow's educated citizenry.

7 The arts and humanities education partners
8 need a more formal role in the D.C. public school
9 budget. We need to be creative in our approach to
10 identifying a way to make the resources available to
11 cultural partners to continue providing their
12 programs and services -- and to growing their
13 provision of services on behalf of the students and a
14 stronger D.C.

15 Portland, Oregon, for example, they levy a
16 \$35 annual tax on all income earning adults living
17 above the federal poverty line to create \$12 million
18 for visual arts and music teachers, and grants for
19 nonprofits offering arts education.

20 We need to figure this together -- we need
21 to figure this out together as a city and to approach
22 this challenge as a student body -- and to approach

1 this challenge as how best should we match our
2 cultural resources and the creativity of our student
3 body in and out of school. And perhaps make this
4 part of a larger cultural planning process that lives
5 across agencies, such as the one spearheaded in
6 Chicago.

7 Arts and arts education can be such a
8 great news story for the city of D.C. with the proper
9 planning and implementation such as a mandate for at
10 least 90 minutes of weekly teaching in the arts. And
11 professional development requirements, and
12 appropriate scheduling regarding teaching in and
13 through the arts.

14 By working with many of our members,
15 students become proficient in their arts discipline
16 and there should be a formal mechanism within the
17 public school system that reflects that mastery.
18 However, it should not come at the expense of the
19 arts and music teachers who need to be in every
20 public school in the District. D.C. needs a coherent
21 and comprehensive approach to arts education that
22 includes an arts education policy and plan, one that

1 advances sequential learning in the arts and builds
2 on robust in-school as well as out-of-school
3 resources in coordination with rather than in a
4 piecemeal fashion that needs to be supported in the
5 city both in policy and fiscally.

6 The arts and humanities should be central
7 to school improvement efforts and the attitude of
8 considering arts as an extra-curricular activity in
9 this day and age is outdated.

10 Arts education, including learning
11 experience in and out of the classroom, and arts
12 instruction in school including music, visual arts,
13 dance, theater, and media arts, and integrating the
14 arts throughout the school to achieve curricular
15 goals should be fiscally supported as a stand-alone
16 effort and not be placed under enrichment or extended
17 day categories.

18 The arts and humanities --

19 TIMEKEEPER: One more minute.

20 MS. NY: Thank you. The arts and
21 humanities are central to student success and should
22 be funded as such. Community partners that are

1 supplementing the arts education that students are
2 receiving in school should be fairly compensated and
3 have a more formal role in the DCPS budget. The
4 stakes are too high and the resources too abundant in
5 D.C., not to make arts and humanities a more central
6 feature of teaching and learning. And DCPS should be
7 supported by the city fiscally and in policy to enact
8 these efforts.

9 Thank you.

10 MS. SONYA BOT: Good evening, Chancellor
11 Henderson and team. Thank you for the opportunity to
12 speak today. My name is Sonya Bot and I'm the
13 education analyst with the D.C. Fiscal Policy
14 Institute. DCFPI is a nonprofit organization that
15 promotes opportunity and widespread prosperity for
16 all D.C. resident through thoughtful policy
17 solutions.

18 I'm here today to ask DCPS to continue to
19 strengthen its effort to improve the transparency of
20 public education funding including the strategic use
21 of new resources for students considered at risk of
22 academic failure.

1 It's an exciting time for education
2 funding in the District. We've been a city of
3 revenue surpluses for the past few years and this has
4 enabled us to invest in important areas of the
5 budget.

6 The D.C. school funding formula was
7 recently examined and adjusted after several years
8 and it better now better reflects what our students
9 really need. Many student categories are increases
10 within the formula and an entirely new category for
11 low-income D.C. students considered at risk was
12 added.

13 This means that poverty is being
14 considered in the way we allocate our educational
15 resource to the tune of 2,000 more per child in an
16 \$80 million investment.

17 There is research showing that increased
18 school spending is linked to better outcomes for
19 low-income students. We also know that it's not just
20 about spending in the classroom, but also about
21 delivering key non-instructional services to meet our
22 students' mental health needs, provide quality after

1 school and summer programming, and to provide enough
2 support for our homeless students.

3 A recent series of reports from the D.C.
4 Fiscal Policy Institute actually chronicled all the
5 great things DCPS is doing, but still large gaps do
6 remain.

7 This additional funding represents a
8 tremendous opportunity for DCPS school to help
9 low-income students receive the extra support they
10 need, but it also raises questions about how these
11 dollars should be spent, and how we can tie these
12 resources to effective programs for D.C. children.

13 Since this was the first year of
14 implementation, for the new at-risk funding there is
15 some room for improvement in the implementation
16 process. For example, according to the Fair Student
17 Funding Legislation, at-risk funding is supposed to
18 follow the child to every DCPS school and school
19 leaders are to have flexibility in how they use these
20 resources. But due to time constraints in the
21 budgeting process, this was not possible in the first
22 year. Instead, the funding went to a number of DCPS

1 initiatives that were already planned, such as middle
2 school supports and grants to reward student
3 satisfaction that are certainly important but were
4 not necessarily targeted to improving outcomes
5 specifically for at-risk students.

6 DCFPI is hopeful that DCPS will be able to
7 use at-risk resources in strategic ways for next
8 school year. Especially if the size of the at-risk
9 wait is increased or flat depending on what we see
10 with the mayor's number. We hope we can see targeted
11 improvement investments in our high-poverty schools.

12 A second issue, one that I've testified on
13 before is that the budget timeline for schools is far
14 too short for these types of important funding
15 decisions. We recommend asking that the mayor extend
16 the budget timeline by setting the appropriation for
17 DCPS before the city's February revenue forecast.
18 I'm sure you'll agree with me.

19 While this creates some risks because it
20 will not be clear at that time how much revenue the
21 city will have to meet its various needs, education
22 will certainly be a top priority each year.

1 Setting a reasonable education funding
2 level in January will give the additional time needed
3 to make better budget allocation decisions.

4 And finally, we recommend that DCPS
5 establish a budget allocation task force that will
6 provide a formal mechanism to incorporate expert and
7 stakeholder advice into local school budgets. One
8 thing we learned from watching the student
9 reassignment committee in action is the value of
10 getting the right people into a room to really tackle
11 these priorities.

12 A budget allocation task force comprised
13 of local school and central office leaders, parent
14 representatives, and community groups can start
15 identifying issues and policies affecting school
16 budgets as early as September, draft budget
17 recommendations to be vetted with the larger
18 community in December, and approved by the Chancellor
19 in January.

20 Thank you for the opportunity to offer
21 input on the '16 DCPS budget. I'm happy to answer
22 any questions.

1 MS. GENEVIEVE SUPERE: Hi, I am Genevieve
2 Supere and I am chair of the School Within a School
3 LSAT and I'm a parent to a kindergartener who is in
4 her second year at SWS, but is in her third year in
5 the DCPS system. And I also have a two-year old who
6 will be entering the lottery this winter to enroll in
7 a spot in the PK3 program next fall, hopefully.

8 And I'm here tonight to talk to you as a
9 DCPS parent and to give a voice to other SWS parents
10 who have a lot to say on this issue, but can't be
11 here tonight.

12 The first thing I want to do is to thank
13 you and DCPS for everything that you guys have done
14 to support SWS. You took a chance on us 20 years ago
15 when you believed in our founder's vision of an early
16 childhood -- a Reggio Emilia early childhood program.
17 And then you did it again a few years ago when you
18 allowed us to expand the program to fifth grade. And
19 with this support SWS has become this bright spot of
20 collaboration with parents and teachers and students
21 and administrators, and even community members. And
22 for that we really wanted to say thank you.

1 But, of course, this is a budget hearing.

2 So we're not here just to say thank you.

3 (Laughter.)

4 MS. SUPERE: I'm not the shell. We do
5 want to ask for things. But we're also here to
6 encourage DCPS to continue to do this kind of
7 investment and to continue to support specialized
8 programs like the one at SWS, but other programs.
9 This is to innovate with other programs that may
10 exist now or that people may think of coming up in
11 the future.

12 One of the most important things, we
13 think, is to allow for the flexibility and
14 collaboration. But along these lines, I want to
15 highlight some of the less-known aspects of our
16 program which I think are important for DCPS to
17 consider as we establish our budget priorities for
18 fiscal year '16.

19 Number one is that our school invests in
20 specialized professional development for our teachers
21 and for the communities. Where DCPS does not provide
22 enough funding, we as parents raise the money and try

1 to meet that gap because we feel this is so
2 important.

3 Our parent group, our advisory support
4 team, supports SWS's participation in Harvard's
5 Project Aero. And last year we hosted a Project Zero
6 workshop at our school, not just for the benefit of
7 our own teachers, but for the benefit of a number of
8 teachers at different schools throughout the region,
9 both private, public, and charter.

10 In addition, we are collaborating with
11 other DCPS schools as a part of the D.C.
12 collaborative to do classroom observations, learn
13 from other schools' practices and to share ours. I
14 cannot emphasize enough what a resounding success the
15 collaborative has been. Walk into our school, ask
16 any one of our teachers what they think of the
17 collaborative and their faces light up as they talk
18 about it.

19 I see happy, engaged teacher with
20 enthusiasm. They're excited to try new things, and
21 they're encouraged by the support that they get
22 through this collaborative. So as a parent, this is

1 exactly the type of investment that -- investment and
2 innovation that draws me to DCPS and keeps me here.
3 And we urge you to continue to fund the collaborative
4 and other programs like it.

5 Also, our school invests in an inclusive
6 vision of education for all. Since we moved to the
7 Goding School two years ago, we have incorporated
8 two medically complex classrooms and we've partnered
9 with Ivy Mount to bring high-functioning, autistic
10 students to Reggio Emilia program. And we urge DCPS
11 to budget for the resources necessary to make these
12 partnerships successful. Because a diverse,
13 inclusive learning environment benefits everyone, and
14 we really applaud DCPS's commitment to this.

15 Finally, our school leverages innovative
16 programs and partnerships. For example, we
17 participate in the food prints program in which our
18 children plant, tend, harvest and cook foods from our
19 school garden. And this is a natural connection in
20 an urban environment and it's a treasure for children
21 living in the city and it provides them with an
22 innovative and hands-on opportunity to connect with

1 multiple areas of learning that includes arts,
2 science, math, and others. It's not just about
3 nutrition, and food. We are able to use this program
4 in so many different ways and it's been so enriching
5 for our students.

6 So, as you may have heard on NPR last
7 week, the DCPS kids love kale thanks to this food
8 prints program. So at SWS we love the food prints
9 program and we really support its expansion, not just
10 within our own school, but within other schools. I
11 believe this year it's been expanded to five
12 different schools and everyone I've talked to with
13 those schools have just sung its praises.

14 So I think I would like to close well
15 before my one-minute warning by saying that, I
16 recognize that SWS's unique approach might not fit
17 for every family. But by investing in a specialized
18 program like ours, DCPS has created options for D.C.
19 families. The commitment to innovative school
20 programs has had such a major effect on families'
21 commitments to D.C. Families are choosing to raise
22 their families here and they're committing to

1 partnering with DCPS to invest in the public school
2 system.

3 And just speaking for myself, in my
4 daughter's second year in the DCPS school system, we
5 bought a new house one block from our old house. So
6 instead of -- with our growing family, instead of
7 going and looking to the suburbs and looking for a
8 good school district someplace else, we said, we want
9 to stay exactly where we are, in our community with
10 our school. So, we celebrate these successes because
11 we really believe these are successes. I came to
12 D.C. 25 years ago, it's been such a marked contrast.

13 But our work isn't done, there's still
14 more to do. At our school in particular, as we
15 integrate the principles of Regia Amelia into our
16 upper elementary grades, our teachers and staff are
17 really breaking new ground and they need more support
18 than ever. We're grateful for the support that DCPS
19 shows us and the investment that DCPS has made in our
20 school and we urge you to continue to invest in us as
21 our program grows and as it matures. So, thank you.

22 MR. RINKUS: Thank you. Beth Bacon will

1 be next. And then after that is Elizabeth from D.C.
2 Youth Orchestra Program. Thank you.

3 MS. BETH BACON: Hi, there. Good evening.
4 Thanks for coming to Ward 6 for this hearing and
5 Payne.

6 I'm Beth Bacon, I'm a parent of a fourth
7 grader at Watkins Elementary and a pre-schooler at
8 SWS where Genevieve is. And I serve on the PTA and
9 the LSAT at the cluster school and I've spent many
10 hours working with our school budget.

11 The cluster school is unique in that we're
12 pre-K3 through eighth grade here in Ward 6 with 1,200
13 students. We have three campuses, we have steady
14 enrollment, strong test scores, and healthy vertical
15 integration. And we have students from all over the
16 city.

17 We have strong educational programs. Our
18 school was the one featured on NPR on the food prints
19 program where food prints actually started at
20 Watkins, as was our common core close reading
21 instruction was profiled with one of our Rubenstein
22 award-winning teachers.

1 or dips the rigid nature of the staffing model, I
2 want to hear what you said earlier about that,
3 creating parity, but for us that has constrained us
4 in being creative in our programming, cultivating a
5 focus or niche at our schools. And I feel like we
6 also -- as you're looking at parity -- we need to
7 look at how the rigid staffing model disadvantages
8 schools, especially middle schools when they aim to
9 increase their success with a certain model attracts
10 students and build on that success.

11 Having a child at two schools, you heard
12 about SWS and about the cluster, I've seen how this
13 sort of creativity and flexibility works at SWS, and
14 I've also seen how it has constrained us at the
15 cluster. So I hope that battle will be a part of the
16 consideration this year.

17 The irony of that is, a rigid academic
18 program or staffing model sometimes drives people
19 away. It causes them to look elsewhere for more
20 creative programs. So I've seen that on the Hill.

21 Too, I would encourage us to think about
22 the -- as somebody had talked about the the way that

1 the per-pupil funding is allocated for the at-risk
2 funding, that piece was rolled into -- as the budget
3 process played out, I came to understand that the
4 additional at-risk allocation was going mostly to the
5 40 lowest performing schools and the PWP student
6 satisfaction grants. I was a bit surprised to learn
7 that the pot of money allocated some of that money
8 for at-risk kids was going to fund field trips, and
9 fund speakers and that piece. Whereas there were
10 really some supports that we could have used for our
11 at-risk kids rather than field trips. So I hope that
12 that's thought of, but differently this year.

13 Ward 6 is flourishing. Thank you for
14 coming here tonight. Our schools have waiting lists
15 and they're performing well. But like most of the
16 city, we really are concentrating on our middle
17 schools and focusing on boosting and supporting them.
18 And so even as you move to shift to focus on high
19 schools this year, I hope you will keep a focus on
20 middle schools and an eye on middle schools and
21 maintain the support for the social, emotional, and
22 extended day, and academic that you piece together

1 this year so we are not dipping back in our middle
2 school investment. So that's important to us.

3 Another opportunity to further investment
4 in Ward 6 that will benefit the entirety of DCPS and
5 public charter schools is for DCPS to support placing
6 a challenger center here in Ward 6 at Elliot High and
7 Middle School. The challenger center is a huge and
8 important opportunity that DCPS can't pass up, and
9 there are numerous stakeholders in Ward 6 and
10 elsewhere ready and willing to work with DCPS on
11 making this happen --

12 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: (Off
13 microphone.)

14 MS. BACON: -- really a huge resource that
15 would be for the good of all public schools in this
16 city not just Ward 6. And I would second Genevieve's
17 piece about DCPS support for Food Prints as just an
18 amazing program. And I'd encourage you to come to
19 the school to see it if you haven't.

20 So, in closing, I would say that if we
21 really believe in the potential of our public schools
22 and we're committed to their success we need

1 investment and continuity in that investment. We
2 need transparency. This year the school budgets were
3 more transparent and we could see the pots of funding
4 and where the money was going, but we need to
5 continue with that to create more transparency.

6 We need coordination between the
7 programmatic spending and the capital spending. And
8 that DCPS new Office of Planning provides a new
9 opportunity to do that and adequate time for parent
10 engagement. We, LSATS and parents appreciate the --
11 early in the process being able to come and talk to
12 you about the budget process and we hope that
13 continues and not be sort of rushed in March to put
14 together a budget really quickly. And so we
15 appreciate this timeline.

16 MS. ELIZABETH SHERGAN: Thank you
17 Chancellor Henderson and team for creating the space
18 and for listening to me tonight. My name is
19 Elizabeth Shergan. I am a resident here of Ward 6,
20 and I'm also entering my second year as executive
21 director of the D.C. Youth Orchestra Program.

22 DCPS has been our biggest partner since

1 our inception in 1960. Since that time our mission
2 has been to provide high-quality music education to
3 students across Washington's full diversity. Housed
4 not too far from here at Eastern High School we offer
5 group lessons and ensemble learning opportunities for
6 young people ages four and a half to 18 regardless of
7 background, ability, or socio-economic status. This
8 semester our program has more than 150 DCPS students
9 representing 48 different DCPS schools.

10 We at the D.C. Youth Orchestra program can
11 relate to DCPS's goal to increase enrollment and the
12 obstacles that can materialize.

13 I'm here today because we share a vision
14 that every DCPS student has the opportunity to play
15 in a band or an orchestra. We pledge our continued
16 commitment to work with you on this. At the D.C.
17 Youth Orchestra program we have seen DCPS renew its
18 commitment to music in the schools. You understand
19 the impact. Music has the power to change lives.
20 Learning a musical instrument develops focus and
21 discipline. Playing in an ensemble teaches
22 collaboration and creativity and performance builds

1 self esteem and self efficacy. All of these skills
2 contribute to academic and life's success.

3 I ask you to further your impact on your
4 students through music in the schools by way of the
5 following:

6 One, invest in school instrumental
7 programs. Learning an instrument and playing in an
8 ensemble is a major incentive for many young people
9 to attend school. School band and orchestra programs
10 will bolster enrollment and satisfaction; and to
11 retain these students over the course of the K
12 through 12 education. DCPS must have quality band
13 orchestra programs at all levels especially high
14 school.

15 According to our records only three DCPS
16 high schools offer full orchestra.

17 Two, invest in an instrumental curriculum.
18 This fall we had two students join the D.C. Youth
19 Orchestra program who had three years' experience in
20 the extracurricular band program at Eastern High
21 School. Yet, despite the time and dedication to
22 their musical studies, they had not been taught how

1 to read music. This is not fair to them, they
2 deserve better.

3 We are here to help with that by investing
4 in an instrumental curriculum such as that of the
5 D.C. Youth Orchestra program, DCPS will unify school
6 music education and strengthen music feeder programs.

7 And, three, invest in our partnership.
8 The D.C. Youth Orchestra program grateful for DCPS's
9 continued support which enables us to do the
10 following:

11 Provide high-quality music education to
12 more than 150 DCPS students at an affordable rate in
13 a beautiful facility. While the actual cost of our
14 program averages \$600 per child per semester, your
15 support enables us to provide discounted tuition for
16 any DCPS student starting as low as \$25 a semester.

17 Your continued support enables us to
18 establish a free, after-school orchestra program
19 which we did this year at Garrison Elementary. The
20 primary purpose of this program known as the
21 Children's Orchestra is to enhance DCPS elementary
22 students interest in learning, strengthen their

1 connection to school, and improve their academic and
2 social skills. We have already seen results and
3 plans are under way to expand to an additional DCPS
4 elevation school next semester. Help us offer this
5 great program to more DCPS students.

6 And, finally, your continued support
7 enables us to start creating, in collaboration with
8 you, an early childhood music education curriculum
9 known as the pre-orchestra project. The primary
10 purpose of this project is to develop and implement a
11 music curriculum that improves kindergarten readiness
12 while increasing the number of students age four to
13 five who have access to high-quality music education.

14 Every DCPS elementary school is equipped
15 with musical instruments, but not every teacher knows
16 how to use them. We want to provide this resource to
17 every single elementary school so that all the
18 pre-kindergarten students can benefit from this.

19 Without your continued support, DCYOP
20 would not be able to provide high-quality music
21 education to more than 150 DCPS students. We ask
22 that as you work to improve your high schools, as you

1 work to expand your extended day opportunities,
2 increase enrollment, and improve student
3 satisfaction, you value us as a partner. The more we
4 work together and grow this partnership, the more
5 DCPS students will have the opportunity to succeed
6 through music. And help us increase the number of
7 DCPS schools represented in our program, the Nation's
8 Youth Orchestra from 48 to 111.

9 Thank you.

10 UNIDENTIFIED PARTICIPANT: What I would
11 say is this. That I should be a guy who is over the
12 moon right now. We have more librarians at DCPS
13 probably than any time in anybody's living memory.
14 With about \$3.4 on collections last year. The
15 libraries have come a long way. And so for me to
16 say, I'm disappointed, it's not because I am a glass
17 half empty kind of guy -- even though I am -- I would
18 say that the problem is, is that leaves the job
19 exactly not quite a third done.

20 Suzanne Wells, who is here tonight, served
21 on your library's task force back in 2012 where they
22 outlined the pretty significant challenges that DCPS

1 and libraries are facing. And after that investment
2 that was made last year of the 3.4 million for new
3 materials, you know -- an analysis, kind of a before
4 and after snapshot was done by a number of the
5 vendors and DCPS still needs about 300,000 additional
6 books at a cost of about \$6 million.

7 Now, the United States of America is the
8 only country on earth where you get to say that \$6
9 million is not very much money. But in the context
10 of a nearly \$900 million school budget, \$6 million is
11 way less than 1 percent; \$6 million will get all of
12 our schools to where they need to be in terms of
13 their collections. And then after that, we need to
14 spend about a million dollars a year to refresh them.
15 You know, and it's just -- like I said, to a lot of
16 people that's a lot of money in the context of what
17 we're operating with, the incredible kind of fiscal
18 largess that the District has been blessed with in
19 the past few years, this is clearly doable.

20 And, you know, one of the unfortunate
21 things there was no money in the FY-15 budget for
22 collection development. And we brought a lot of new

1 librarians in. But the thing that concerns me about
2 not having made any additional investment in the
3 FY-15 budget is the fact that it brings -- puts all
4 of those new hires at risk. A lot of them working in
5 schools with old and small collections, and, you
6 know, brought in with the promises that resources
7 would be forthcoming. And, you know, to my -- you
8 know, maybe there's something there that I'm missing,
9 but I don't see any money for collection development.
10 And it's not just the possibility of losing all of
11 these professionals that we've worked so hard to
12 recruit and that we need to recruit more -- we're
13 still not at full capacity in terms of our school
14 librarians -- we have a situation where if you look
15 at the numbers from those studies, this is before and
16 after studies, of where our schools are at in terms
17 of their collection needs, that the schools with the
18 highest needs in terms of numbers of volumes for
19 their collections, are also the schools that are
20 performing, by far, the most poorly on reading scores
21 in the D.C. CASS. I mean, there is a deep and
22 profound nexus.

1 I mean, I was just struck going through
2 school by school looking at what the needs were in
3 terms of bringing it up to accepted norms, and, you
4 know, where they were performing at the DC CASS. And
5 the fact is, is that, I mean, Chancellor, as you, I
6 think, learned the past couple of years, what we all
7 have that have been involved in this issue, that
8 there is a very, very strong correlation between the
9 presence of good school libraries and school
10 librarians, and performance on reading. There's 50
11 years of evidence for that. And I think that the
12 dis-invest -- well, not dis-investment or lack of
13 sustained investment, you know, I think it really is
14 holding back a lot of kids -- some of the neediest
15 kids in this city. And trying to get local schools
16 or local PTAs to pick up the slack, well, the capital
17 cluster school gave \$8,000 for their school library,
18 that's going to help it out some. Lafayette
19 Elementary School, I had some very nice conversations
20 last year with the former principal there. You know,
21 said that every year the PTA giving them \$10,000 a
22 year. But this just helps perpetuate the terrible

1 kinds of class divisions that we have in this city.
2 That if you're fortunate enough to go to a school
3 where the parents have the means to raise money, you
4 know, you have what you need. And if you go to a
5 school that isn't like that, which an awful lot of
6 kids in this city go to, then, you know, it's a --
7 they become poster children for inequality. And you
8 see how it plays out in terms of their academic
9 performance.

10 So all I would say is that I urge you to
11 not only fund libraries adequately going forward in
12 FY-16, but I do hope that you would circle back and
13 try to find some money to make up for the difference
14 for what didn't make it into the FY-15 budget.

15 Thanks very much.

16 MR. MARTY WELLS: So, for those of you who
17 don't know me, my name is Marty Wells. I'm speaking
18 as a parent here tonight. I have three children at
19 Amidon-Bowen Elementary School which is a Ward 6
20 school, Title I school.

21 Thank you for all your support towards
22 Amidon over the past couple years.

1 Over this past summer Ms. Curitan, our
2 hard-working, late-night working, administrative
3 assistant had her office subdivided so that the
4 principal could move closer to the action. The
5 principal got the windows, Ms. Curitan did not. And
6 so she stares at a blank wall. So if there's money
7 in the budget, could we get her a nice mountain
8 brook, sun-shiny type picture for her administrative
9 office.

10 PARTICIPANT: (Off microphone.)

11 MR. WELLS: Do we? Okay. I will spend it
12 then.

13 And let me give you a little report on the
14 extended day. We had an LSAT meeting last week and
15 some teachers were there and I asked them -- for
16 those who don't know -- Amidon-Bowen is one of the
17 two elementary schools in the city that has full
18 extended day and it's working well. I asked the
19 teachers, how is it going? They said, it's a long
20 day. And I said, well, what was it before? And they
21 said, it was a long day. Okay. And they said, but
22 with extended day it's a better pace. And it's a

1 little bit more civilized pace. So in that respect
2 the extended day is better for the teachers. I don't
3 pretend to speak on the teachers' behalf, but that's
4 my impression.

5 As a parent, I think the extended day is
6 fantastic. The one thing in the budget that came up
7 is, I believe the teachers get administrative premium
8 for that last hour. And I believe it's a -- I don't
9 know how much money it is, it's a little bit more
10 money, but I don't know if there's a way to make it a
11 greater amount of money for that extended day. I
12 think if there's money in the budget, I would like to
13 see it go there because I want to see the extended
14 day continue. And I'd also like to see the extended
15 year happen as well.

16 And then your focus is on high schools
17 this year, and I appreciate that last year was the
18 focus on middle schools. But I don't want you to
19 lose sight of the middle schools. You know, here in
20 Ward 6 we have two middle schools that are really in
21 dire need of that capital improvement. I know
22 they're coming in 2016. But, boy, we've got to get

1 Jefferson and we've got to get Elliott Hine up and
2 running and get them in full enrollment. Elliott
3 Hine can handle 700 kids and I think Jefferson can
4 handle 600. That will get you to your 50,000 if we
5 can get those schools fully enrolled.

6 I'm in the boat. I'm rowing with you.
7 I'm rowing as hard as I can. I've got a little bit
8 more gas in the tank. I'll keep rowing. But, we've
9 really got to focus on -- particularly in Ward 6,
10 Jefferson and Elliott Hine. And since I'm closer to
11 Jefferson than I am Elliott Hine, I'd like to flip
12 that school around, literally so that the entrance
13 now faces the \$2 billion waterfront project on Maine
14 Avenue as opposed to the field on the other side.

15 And then a concern I have with budget for
16 next year. As you know, we're opening up Van Ness
17 within Amidon-Bowen's territory. They're going to
18 have their own territory. And one of the budgetary
19 considerations is the impact of the two schools. I
20 don't -- I'm not sure we exactly know how it's going
21 to play out. Is there going to be a large influx
22 over to Van Ness? Is it going to drain from Amidon?

1 Is it going to equalize? And when you consider your
2 budgets for next year, I just would hope that you
3 wouldn't adhere strictly to a student per funding
4 formula and take into consideration the fact that
5 these are two new schools. So I wouldn't want money
6 snatched way from Amidon or Van Ness, for that
7 matter, as well.

8 TIMEKEEPER: You've got one minute left.

9 DR. SHERIANNA BROWN: Good evening, my
10 name is Dr. Sherianna Brown and I'm a parent of a
11 student at Elliott High Middle School. And I'll be
12 brief, and these may be things that are already in
13 your budgeted plans, but I just wanted to advocate
14 for two things in particular. One is, equity for
15 after care or after-school programming at the middle
16 school level. Particularly for the schools that
17 don't have extended-day programs. This is very
18 important for working parents such as myself to have
19 programs that are available Monday through Friday
20 until 6:00 p.m.

21 There are some outside organizations that
22 supplement some of these resources, but the very

1 scheduling can sometimes be a challenge, where they
2 provide service Monday and Wednesday until 5:30 and
3 Tuesday and Thursday until 3:30. And not open at all
4 on Fridays. That's a challenge for working parents
5 who are not always ready to let their children go in
6 middle school just because they are older.

7 Also, sometimes the outside organizations
8 that supplement these activities require
9 participation in an activity that a student may not
10 be interested in. So it would be ideal to have a
11 Monday through Friday option that allows time for
12 homework, and academic enrichment, particularly for
13 those areas that students need more tutoring to
14 improve their performance in.

15 Also, a variety of extracurricular
16 activities. The clubs and organizations can come
17 into play. The sports. And building the middle
18 school sports could be helpful if it's more
19 structured and organized so that by the time they go
20 to eastern, that those schools are more prepared now
21 and more competitive in their athletics.

22 And the sponsored organizations could help

1 as well, but it would be good to have more variety of
2 the extracurriculars in combination with the academic
3 enrichment. And then this is very important, as
4 well, something that's ready to begin when school
5 starts, not a week after school starts, or after
6 Labor Day, or, you know, well into the month of
7 September. Something that you can enroll in prior to
8 school beginning and have ready when your child
9 starts school.

10 Another area which may, you know, be in
11 your budget scope that I want to advocate for is an
12 investment in physical accessibility for students
13 with disabilities. I believe that a student with a
14 physical disability should be able to go to their
15 neighborhood school and have ease of access in the
16 schools with the entrances and exits, be able to have
17 elevators in their schools that would help them
18 travel between floors. Also adjustable desks and
19 tables so that they're able to use in the classroom.
20 I think these should be standard things that are
21 available to all schools and that a student shouldn't
22 have to travel outside of their neighborhood because

1 their elementary school or their middle school or
2 their high school does not have an elevator. Or they
3 can't go to a city-wide high school because it's
4 physically not accessible to them. So I think that's
5 something I would like to see DCPS invest in more is
6 physical accessibility.

7 There are students who don't have a
8 learning disability or psychological disability,
9 their only disability may be something that's
10 physical, and it may not even be visible to everyone.
11 And so that's something that I hope would be more of
12 a priority in the future as well.

13 MR. DAVID SMITH: Good evening, Chancellor
14 and staff, audience. If my children were here, they
15 would be going nuts because this is so tame. You
16 know, we need to bring young people in so we can have
17 a little fun when we have these meetings.

18 I work with young people, so I need their
19 energy. I have five basic things that I wanted to
20 request as you consider budget.

21 First, I'd like to say that I'm very
22 pleased with what -- I'm a native Washingtonian,

1 fifth generation. My name is David Smith. I'm the
2 Deanwood Citizens Association President. I'm also
3 the executive director of the PRO Coalition. Our
4 program on the nonprofit side is centered around
5 cultural education enrichment. And just a quick
6 informational tidbit, the majority of our schools in
7 D.C. are named after Civil Rights, Abolitionists,
8 Activists, both white and black from over 100 years
9 who fought for human rights, not just for
10 Washingtonians, but folks locally. And as a city, I
11 think we're losing that. So that's one of the pieces
12 that I wanted to talk about related to STEM programs.

13 I don't know how they became STEM, but
14 when I was a kid youth orchestra, we went as early as
15 the third grade, every student played an instrument.
16 We all had to participate in the safety parole parade
17 which was twice the size of the National Cherry
18 Blossom parade. At the end of the parade we would
19 have competitions between elementary level, middle
20 level, and then high school. And then we would watch
21 the high schools battle, and we would watch Howard
22 University be afraid to get involved because our high

1 school bands were so serious.

2 So I got a scholarship to ANT because I
3 was a horrible student, so I had to use that music
4 scholarship. But if it wasn't for that musical
5 scholarship, I don't know if I would be standing here
6 today with you. So youth symphony orchestra, the
7 Kennedy Center Orchestra, and just the basic
8 curriculum that was in DCPS worked fine. It was what
9 we're putting back now. So I'm glad to see DCPS
10 going in that direction.

11 So I would like to see more STEM programs
12 I think eliminating the arts. We talk about middle
13 schools, the only reason I went to middle school was
14 because I was in the band. In the '80s it was a war
15 zone. So I also want folk to consider that when you
16 look at the data, poverty has a direct correlation to
17 prison beds. So as we talk about improving the city
18 -- the schools throughout the city, we have to
19 consider the trends around affordable housing have a
20 direct correlation of what schools will be
21 successful.

22 So as you plan your budget really consider

1 that. We're fighting in Ward 7 not to receive 90
2 percent of affordable housing. It really needs to be
3 something that's stratified throughout the city so we
4 can all share the burden of helping our neighborhood,
5 not just our community which is struggling
6 financially in itself. So you will have the same
7 struggles as the school. So that's important to
8 understand. But with STEM and STEAM programs, STEAM
9 programs, I think a lot of the young people
10 culturally in our community could bond to those
11 things that you look forward to as opposed to just
12 the day-to-day monotony.

13 So secondly, cultural and historic
14 education opportunities are critical. We need
15 additional campuses. I've heard some great stories
16 here tonight, and we want to see exactly that in
17 Deanwood. We have Ron Brown Roper. We want it
18 reopened. Our elementary schools are above capacity.
19 But we don't have a feeder for our high school and
20 that's a problem. We are not competitive as a
21 result. I mean, H. D. Woodson probably would get
22 blown away by Eastern's band. So I'm going to put

1 everything in the context of music, by the way.

2 But that's an indication of the lack of
3 competitiveness as relates to our feeder schools. We
4 have to get a better system. So in Deanwood, we're
5 really looking to see that educational process
6 continue. I'm a father of five. I'm very blessed,
7 straight A students, done really well, in schedule,
8 but I send them to schools where they can be
9 competitive, and that is not in my community.

10 And I want that to change. I want it to
11 change really soon. The parents who have asked me to
12 come tonight specifically, because their
13 elementary-school-age kids want to go to school
14 across the street. And they're concerned that
15 they're not going to get the same quality equitably
16 as we see in this community. By the way, this is a
17 lovely school, by the way.

18 TIMEKEEPER: You've got one minute left.

19 MR. SMITH: One minute left. All right.

20 So we want to see that additional
21 campus-based education opportunity in Deanwood.

22 We want to also see for our middle school

1 students and our high school students internship
2 opportunities that are connected directly to
3 quote/unquote programming. So we have STEAM or STEM,
4 PEPCO is being built in Ward 7. Why is not our H. D.
5 Woodson science STEM program directly connected to
6 the employment opportunities that will be happening
7 with PEPCO? I mean, these are like -- I'm sorry, I'm
8 getting flustered. Because these are low-hanging
9 fruit. And I don't think that's DCPS's primary
10 responsibility. But it's just something to consider.

11 How do we bridge our programs to
12 industries that we know are emerging now so we can
13 get on the kids that are in communities where the
14 socio-economic status is so wide? Why can't we
15 funnel them in? It existed before. I remember. And
16 I'd like to see DCPS figure out how to budgetarily
17 put those things back in place.

18 And just one last comment is, I just
19 wanted to thank the staff at DCPS. We've had -- we
20 as a community, we tug at what we think is best. And
21 the conversation and dialogue with DCPS has gotten so
22 much better than it has been in the past. So I just

1 want to encourage you to continue your work and
2 continue this process so we can stay engaged. All
3 right. Thank you.

4 MR. ANTOINE HOLMES: My name is Antoine
5 Holmes. I am the advisory neighborhood commissioner
6 for 7C07 which is Deanwood which is home to Houston
7 Elementary School, soon to be opening hopefully, Ryan
8 Brown Middle School and we also have idea of charter
9 schools. And in addition there is an unused -- but
10 it's there -- it's a day care center that's there.
11 That's housed actually within the brand-new Deanwood
12 Recreation Center which was a \$13 million building.

13 So what I would like to say about Deanwood
14 is that -- especially within my same number District,
15 education is one of the major issues that go on
16 within my four walls. And it has that potential to
17 also be that education campus that's necessary to
18 help funnel and feed and make DCPS better if we just
19 have a little bit more assistance to along with the
20 vision of something similar to a promise
21 neighborhood.

22 So some of the things that I want to talk

1 about today is first of is the thing -- what we talk
2 about most on east of the river is basically the lack
3 of a language emergent at the elementary school
4 level. We've already reached out to the principal
5 there and what we would like to see, hopefully,
6 probably in '15 and '16, we would like to start to
7 see language emerging, hopefully Spanish, for the
8 young ones, pre-K through pre-K4 so that, you know,
9 some of the parents, as I talk to them when I walk
10 through my community they want -- they talk about
11 charters like it's saving their children with the
12 education. I say, D.C. just have the same program,
13 we just need them on our side of town.

14 Also to go along with that, if you --
15 again, as the President David Smith just said, this
16 is a lovely building. I went through the budget and
17 I saw that. It looks like there are a couple
18 upgrades maybe coming but money was supposed to come
19 this year for Houston. It looks like it got pushed
20 out for FY-17. But we just need to know that those
21 improvements into the buildings is coming along,
22 because that's what the parents like to see when they

1 come into the new building. Take one step here,
2 while they want to go to the old run-down building
3 that's right across the street from the house. All
4 right.

5 Again, across the street, Ron Brown, when
6 I moved there it was open. So subsequently it was
7 closed because of enrollment. But hearing that
8 there's great things possibly happening with
9 applications base, the community -- again, many of
10 the parents I talk to are itching to see that school
11 open back up so that they don't have to send their
12 kids all the way across the street to Kelly Miller.
13 One of the things people don't understand over on our
14 side at Deanwood, much like Kenilworth, much like
15 other neighborhoods, these are very specific
16 neighborhoods and happen to go across major streets
17 through raised bridges, et cetera, goes into other
18 neighborhoods, et cetera, people like local schools.
19 People like to go to a school that's right down the
20 street. And even something that you might say is
21 like eight to ten city blocks, it's completely
22 different than it is if you're right in your four

1 walls of your neighborhood.

2 All right. Again, so application based
3 and again, to reiterate STEAM, we have lots of
4 instruments and kids they have all this kind of
5 energy and they want to be able to, you know, play an
6 instrument or, you know, the art programs. We have
7 all these type of things that we have at the rec
8 center that people do right now, and it's happening
9 mostly because they're not getting it at their local
10 school right now.

11 Again, I mentioned about the -- when they
12 built the Ron Brown -- sorry, when they built the
13 Deanwood recreation center, they had put a space in
14 the back, they wanted to do a daycare.
15 Unfortunately, it seemed like it never got funded.
16 And I know this might be a little bit outside of the
17 boundaries of, you know, the pre-K3 that you're
18 talking about, that exists, from six weeks to age
19 three. But, again, that would be the feeder right
20 there to go into Houston Elementary School. So a
21 little work and vision and collaboration possibly
22 with DPR, et cetera, to possibly stand it up, that

1 would definitely help all the working parents that
2 work over on our side of town, as well as the people
3 who come to work in our community that would also
4 like a place for their kids to be at during their
5 work day.

6 TIMEKEEPER: You have one minute.

7 MR. HOLMES: Thank you.

8 Okay. And finally, kind of what was said
9 before, again, talking to the parents. They always
10 want to talk about having to go to the charter
11 schools to hopefully, you know, save their kids,
12 because there's no good schools there. And that's
13 kind of the first things we always try to challenge
14 them and say, well, have you gone to the school yet?
15 Have you walked, have you talked? And the thing
16 comes up -- the thing that happens about that is
17 that, there's -- I guess there needs to be -- there
18 definitely needs to be a two-way conversation that
19 needs to occur where the principals and the staff are
20 coming out and try to meet over at the central office
21 trying to work with the flyers and bring out better
22 marketing and let you say, hey, you know, school is

1 going to have a language emergent program, or the
2 school is going to be upgraded. These are great
3 reasons to come back to want to give Houston or other
4 schools a try over on this side.

5 Because, if we look in our mailboxes right
6 now, that's what we received from the charter school
7 in terms of competition. So that's all that I have.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. HEATHER SCHOLL: Hello. I'm Heather
10 Scholl. I have a fifth grader at Maury and a seventh
11 grader at Eliot-Hine. So thank you for the
12 opportunity to speak, first of all. I like the
13 autonomy idea that you have.

14 One thing that I would suggest is to build
15 in an opportunity for vertical integration or back
16 mapping, or whatever you want to call it, between the
17 feeder schools because I think that there's a lot of
18 good that comes out of that. When the teachers can
19 know each other and know what works and what the
20 challenges that they've seen in the incoming students
21 are. And currently there's no opportunity for that
22 built in. So, schools need to use their substitute

1 budgets and that kind of thing. And they don't get
2 an opportunity to do that on Phil Emery days. So if
3 we can build something in that would be great.

4 Also, I think it's great to fund things
5 like you're talking about, but I would really like a
6 focus on the basics. Like you were talking
7 libraries, Eliot-Hine has a half-time librarian which
8 means the library is locked on Tuesday and Thursday
9 and every other Friday. So that's a problem
10 especially when you're doing so much to build the
11 academics and the rigor to not have an opportunity to
12 check out books or to do research, that is pretty
13 counterintuitive.

14 The field trips, building the money in for
15 field trips. That's great, but if you look around
16 schools, if you actually see what they're doing with
17 so much money and so many jobs tied up with --
18 directly linked to how they do on their testing,
19 schools often don't do any field trips until after
20 testing is over. I mean, that's just the truth. And
21 while we're on field trips, I think it would make a
22 lot of sense to have some sort of bus checkout system

1 rather than giving a chunk of money to each school
2 individually to fund field trips where you're
3 spending \$400 to get a bus to take the kids to the
4 next town over. If you had a checkout system where
5 we have all these buses, just check them out so you
6 can use them between 9:30 and 2:00 or whatever. That
7 would, I would think, save a lot of money.

8 And I'm wondering -- I know that you have
9 some people who work with like child and family
10 services. I'm wondering if there is more of a focus
11 and some innovative ideas that could be brought up to
12 working with other agencies, DCPS working with the
13 other agencies to make -- to make families sometimes
14 a little bit more prepared to go to school. I mean,
15 if you ask teachers, it's the kids who are -- who
16 have had breakfast, who have had a good night sleep,
17 who show up ready to learn, that is what is going to
18 drive DCPS academics forward. It's really hard to
19 learn when you're sleepy because, you know, there's
20 been a party at your house or whatever, when you
21 can't sleep. So I would really encourage some
22 collaboration with the other agencies so that the

1 burden isn't all on DCPS. It's not -- DCPS's job is
2 to educate, not to undo what's been done.

3 And finally, I would love for you to put
4 your thing down and if charter schools are going to
5 be taking public funds, I would really like them to
6 follow the DCPS model for middle school and start at
7 sixth grade. Because it's not fair for parents in
8 fourth grade, at the beginning of their fourth grade
9 year to have to decide what their child is going to
10 for middle school. It's not fair. It's a lot of
11 pressure and, you know, they might be missing out on
12 their DCPS opportunities because they feel like they
13 either need to get into the charter school now or
14 they're screwed up for the rest of their life.

15 And then also if a child leaves a charter
16 school, that per-pupil funding allocation ought to
17 follow that child immediately. That's the end of the
18 story. I mean, that's it. So, if -- you know, let
19 us know if parents can help push that. But, yeah.

20 So anyway, thank you.

21 MS. SUZANNE WELLS: Hi. My name is
22 Suzanne Wells. I'm a parent of a student at Tyler

1 Elementary. And in 2012, I was fortunate to be able
2 to serve on the DCPS Library task force. And the
3 task force made a number of recommendations on
4 staffing and collection development. And since the
5 task force released its recommendations DCPS has made
6 many strides in improving libraries. And while it's
7 not perfect, as Heather just described, as schools
8 with under 400 students now have funding for
9 part-time librarians and large schools have funding
10 for full-time librarians.

11 But one important recommendation that has
12 not been implemented is the per-student funding
13 formula that's dedicated for collection development.
14 When research was conducted for the task force, we
15 learned that school systems across the country and in
16 surrounding school districts provide a per-student
17 funding formula to support library collection
18 development.

19 While the research was not exhaustive, we
20 learned two years ago that funding formulas between
21 \$6 to \$24 per student -- and \$24 was what Arlington
22 County provides -- went to local schools to support

1 the purchasing of new books.

2 As Peter McPherson said earlier, without
3 providing the per-student funding formula the library
4 collections quickly become out of date and schools
5 with forward-looking PTAs get funding from their PTAs
6 to purchase new books, but schools without PTAs often
7 don't get funds to purchase new books and their
8 collections quickly fall behind.

9 Providing a per-student funding formula
10 for collection development is a simple, low-cost, and
11 standard practice across the country and it should be
12 for DCPS. So I encourage DCPS to budget next year
13 for a per-student funding formula for collection
14 development. Thank you.

15 MR. JOE WEEDON: Thank you, Chancellor,
16 testimony, everyone. It's great to see so many
17 friends from the community here. I've got a couple
18 of take aways from today. One is flexibility. I
19 think there was a lot of talk about the continued
20 need for DCPS to reform and move forward and drive
21 towards the five goals. But also for some amount of
22 flexibility at the local level working with the LSATs

1 and making sure that each school can carve out a
2 unique identity that it can use to attract and help
3 support those goals.

4 The other thing that I really heard was
5 funding needs to follow at-risk students. And I
6 think that was a theme that came out too late in last
7 year's budget process for you and for the public
8 charter board and for the council to really make that
9 happen. But I look forward to really looking at how
10 we can do that this year.

11 The other thing that hasn't really been
12 talked much about yet tonight, but that I'd like to
13 see you focus on a little bit, and I stand committed
14 to working with you at this, is how do we better
15 engage our parents? Throughout the campaign over the
16 last few months, the one thing that really struck me
17 was that most of the stories I heard about Eastern
18 High School here in Ward 6 or middle schools,
19 Eliot-Hine, Jefferson, Stewart-Hopson, they were
20 based on stories or events that happened ten, 15
21 years ago. Very few people know what is going on in
22 our DCPS schools.

1 I have a fourth grader. I have a second
2 grader as well at Maury Elementary. I'm receiving
3 mailings from the public charter community almost
4 weekly asking me to enroll my student -- my daughter
5 -- next year in their public charter. I have yet to
6 receive one thing from DCPS about my neighborhood
7 middle school.

8 Now, we need to work with the middle
9 school, Ms. Young at Eliot-Hine is hosting open
10 houses and she's out in the community. But we need a
11 coordinated effort. They need help in marketing and
12 selling themselves. And we've got to do better at
13 that in building these system. I support the vast
14 majority of the reforms that DCPS has undertaken over
15 the last few years. I believe we're moving forward
16 in a very strong and aggressive manner and I look
17 forward to achieving these goals.

18 Thank you.

19 CHANCELLOR HENDERSON: Okay. So I want
20 to, again, thank everybody for coming out tonight,
21 for sharing their thoughts, their feedback. In fact,
22 first of all, I want to say, I appreciate how much

1 you acknowledged how far we've come. We have done a
2 lot. We've made a lot of strides in a bunch of
3 areas. But we all recognize that we're not where we
4 need to be and we still have a long way to go. So I
5 think appreciating both sides are really important.

6 A couple of things came up that I just
7 wanted to underscore and reiterate. We are -- we
8 will continue to be committed to continuity in
9 budgeting and transparency in budgeting. It's never
10 our goal to have wildly fluctuating budgets or to not
11 be able to show you where we're spending our money.
12 A lot of times we're affected by other city agencies.
13 We've worked really hard with the Office of the Chief
14 Financial Officer to be able to, for the first time
15 last year, show school budgets in a very different
16 way. We'll continue to press on that front so that
17 you have the information that you need to know about
18 where we're spending our money.

19 We will continue to press with you around
20 the budget timeline process. I think it's unideal,
21 inideal, it's not ideal for all of us. And it means
22 that we have shorter times to actually collaborate

1 and figure out how we're going to spend our money.
2 And so we will continue to try to push for as early a
3 mark as possible, get information to you as early as
4 possible, and try to provide as many opportunities
5 for folks to weigh in as possible.

6 Lots of conversations about the arts. I
7 hope that you understand that we are committed to the
8 arts. We've put -- we've reinserted the arts across
9 a lot of our school buildings and we'll continue to
10 do that. We have partnered with great folks like
11 DCYOP, the Washington Performing Art Society, all
12 kinds of community partners to help bring the arts to
13 schools and we'll continue to do that.

14 Extended day, you know, we don't have a
15 one-size-fits-all model on extended day. And we've
16 allowed schools to do the things that are important
17 to them. We'll continue to push on that.

18 We will continue to collaborate with other
19 agencies. In fact, a lot of what we're able to do is
20 because we do have good partnerships with other city
21 agencies who allow us to not have to bear the burden
22 by ourselves. But there's more that we can do on

1 that front and we'll continue to do that.

2 We're doing a lot around career and
3 technical education and making sure that the
4 connections between what we're teaching in our
5 schools and real jobs that are high-wage, high-growth
6 jobs, are opportunities that all of our young people
7 will have access to and that we're starting that
8 exposure in the middle grades level. We're looking
9 at rethinking our college programming, our counseling
10 programming to make sure that students and families
11 know what it takes to get to and through college and
12 to make sure that we are lining that up from the
13 moment that they hit middle grades.

14 But at the end of the day, my request for
15 you is sort of tacks on to what Mr. Weeden kind of
16 said at the end. There's a lot of exciting things
17 going on in D.C. Public Schools and a lot of people
18 don't know about it. In part because we haven't done
19 a good job of communicating out, of marketing and
20 whatnot. And I'd like to introduce to you Ernestine
21 Benedict.

22 Ernestine is our new chief of

1 communications and you will see a lot more
2 information coming out about DCPS. We've got a new
3 newsletter, we've got all kinds of stuff and more to
4 come. But, actually, you are our best spokes people.
5 You are in the schools every day. You see different
6 things happening, and a lot of times we only express
7 to other families our frustrations about DCPS. We
8 don't always highlight the amazing things that are
9 going on. And so I would love it if you all would
10 continue to help us spread the word. If there are
11 suggestions from a communications standpoint, please
12 let us know, we'll get that stuff to Ernestine and
13 we'll try to do that.

14 But our commitment to you is to in this
15 budget reflect the priorities that we've heard from
16 you, that we've heard from the students to the best
17 extent possible. And we will work very, very hard to
18 do that this year. This is the beginning of a
19 conversation that will last between now and March.
20 And I look forward to continuing the conversation.

21 Thank you so much for coming out. You
22 could be anywhere else tonight, but you think it's

1 important enough to be here working with us on making
2 DCPS the best urban school district in the country.

3 Thank you.

4 (Whereupon, the meeting was adjourned.)

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